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R 111101Z SEP 07
FM AMCONSUL CHENNAI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1194
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2753
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 5105
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 0835
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 1359
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0562
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 1005

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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: MAOIST BOMB ATTACK MISSES FORMER ANDHRA PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

REF: CHENNAI 083

11. (U) Former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and current Member of Parliament N. Janardhana Reddy and his wife N. Rajyalaxmi, Minister for Women and Child Welfare in the AP state government, narrowly escaped a bomb attack on Friday, September 7 in Nellore district in southern Andhra Pradesh (approximately 400 kilometers south of Hyderabad and 150 kilometers north of Chennai). Reddy was traveling in an armored vehicle when a remote-controlled landmine exploded, destroying one of the other vehicles in the motorcade. Two Congress party workers and the driver died on the spot. As a former Chief Minister who has been targeted by the Maoists (also known as Naxalites), Reddy receives a high level of security protection.

12. (SBU) According to Durga Prasad, Inspector General of Police who heads Andhra Pradesh's elite anti-Maoist "Greyhounds" force, the Maoists' decision to attack in heretofore unaffected Nellore district reflects their desire to select softer targets away from areas of police focus. According to Prasad, "The complacency stemmed from the fact that the district has been free from Naxalite activity. A re-checking of the area on Friday morning before the travel of Reddy could have averted the attack." Prasad said the type of bomb used was similar to the mechanism used in their October 2003 attempt to assassinate then Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu.

13. (SBU) COMMENT: Reddy has been on the Maoist hit list ever since his 1990-1992 term as Chief Minister for initiating the ban against the Maoist People's War Group (PWG). The September 7 attack was, in fact, the second Maoist attempt against his life. The attempt against Reddy was likely retaliation for the killing by Andhra Pradesh police of several top Maoist leaders in the past two years (reftel). Maoist leader Ganapathy recently responded to a set of questions sent by a newspaper by writing: "We single out for attack a small coterie of political leaders that play a crucial role in finalizing policies." Ganapathy acknowledged that "a massive police commando force with unlimited powers" resulted in severe losses to the Maoist movement in the state. Smarting for a chance to hit back, the Maoists probably chose Reddy because of motive and opportunity: they resent him for banning the PWG, and he travels frequently in the southern part of Andhra Pradesh where police are less focused on the Maoist threat than their northern counterparts.

HOPPER